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621
623 ters, and the village constitutes a unit for all dances; in fact
[535] this ceremonial unity is its most important function.
[796] With the exception of a few villages built on the seashore,
each Bella Coola settlement consists of a row of houses on the
361 river bank. These are of the usual rectangular, plank-built
[184] type typical of the North-West Coast. In front of them
[342] stretches a sidewalk, usually supported by piles on the side
[171] nearest the river to make it level. The houses, too, in many
cases have piles beneath their front ends, made necessary by
the steep slope of the bank. In large villages there may be two
rows of houses, behind and above one another. Usually there
[487] is a rough path parallel to the row of houses at the very edge
[164] of the river. The number of houses varies; before the smallpox
epidemic some villages contained as many as thirty or forty,
others, only two or three. There is no definite arrangement of
the houses; anyone may build where there is a vacant space.
[433] Much the same arrangement occurs in the sea-coast villages,
each of which depends for its main sustenance on an ocean
fish-trap, as the river villages depend on a salmon-weir.

342 The central part of each house is occupied by a large fire,
[354] often sunk a considerable distance below the level of the floor,
and around this is an open space free to all. Toward the side-
walls are raised the partitions, forming bedrooms for the dif-
ferent families, or for different members of one. In many cases
the flooring is removed in three or four parts of the house for
small fires on which different groups cook, the central fire
being used for heating and for more important meals. The
[572] number of families occupying a house depends on its size; an
[223] important chief, with many relatives, often builds an enormous
house which is occupied by ten or more families; smaller houses
contain only two or three. Life in the larger houses is free
and open; people are constantly passing in and out, and any-
[261] one present when food is being distributed is given a share as
[353] a matter of course. Most of the houses are decorated with
[535] carved upright posts and paintings on the beams and back-wall.
A door through the latter leads to the back-room, so important
in dances.

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be made more powerful by magical means or the ritual acts of relatives. Although these often entail great labour and expense, parents seldom neglect their duty; in fact, care for their children is one of the strongest Bella Coola characteristics, though the methods used are so foreign to the white man that he has difficulty in realizing their meaning. The hope of both parents is to have children to carry on their names; infanticide is unknown and the death of an infant is mourned almost as much as that of an adult. Sterility and impotency are frequent causes for divorce.

At the present time there is a high birth-rate in Bella Coola, although the heavy infant mortality prevents any appreciable increase in the population. In the old days, it is said, there were always large families, though much confidence cannot be placed in this statement. In families where there are several children, the first-born, whether boy or girl, assumes an important position. His or her influence, as eldest, is naturally considerable, and the parents foster this through the vague feeling that it is proper for the eldest to be the most important in the family. In adult years, and after marriage, the influence of the eldest of a family continues to have considerable weight with younger brothers and sisters.

If a man is poor he cannot hope to have more than one wife, and his family circle will be limited to their children, and perhaps to elderly parents. On the other hand, a wealthy and powerful man usually has a larger family. Not only may he have several wives, but his aged relatives, and those of his wife, look to him for support and assistance. Such are usually welcome to live in his house; they lend what aid they can in collecting food, and it gratifies a man's pride and sense of power to be closely surrounded by a large family. The Bella Coola are, on the whole, considerate to their aged relatives.[1]

[1] This is not true of the present. During the winter of 1923-4 a feeble old man, living alone, was often in actual want of food. Disliked and despised, of a morose disposition himself, none of his surviving relatives, of whom the nearest were nephews, would take him into their houses. Commenting on this man's fate, several informants pointed out how, in the old days, such a one could have found

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The married sons of a chief usually live in his house, and if he is very powerful the husbands of his daughters may also reside with him. Such a man is at the zenith of power, surrounded by a close group, formed of elderly relatives, of children and grandchildren. Connections by marriage are also added to the family group. At the present time, for example, one Bella Coola man is looking after his brother's widow, and it is felt that she is a member of his family. 592 556 622 602

Another way in which a rich man can increase the size of his family is by adoption. Parents who have lost an infant may adopt the child of some member of the ancestral family of either father or mother. The matter is usually arranged soon after birth, and the transfer takes place immediately after weaning. The real parents are willing since they know that the adopting parents will be able to validate valuable prerogatives and names for the child, which they themselves are unable to do. This desire for their child's welfare overrules parental love. In such cases the real father or mother can likewise bestow names and other prerogatives on the child, who really becomes a member of two families. This is often done by an old couple whose own children have married and moved away, and who thus find themselves lonely. It is considered disgraceful for parents to allow their children to be adopted by anyone not a member of their ancestral family, since that would be an admission of inability to bring up a child in the path of his ancestors. 556 597 614 [888]

"Your father was not strong," could be said to such a child as a reproach.

In the case of an orphan some wealthy relative is almost always ready to adopt him. Consequently, as he grows up, he receives his full share of the ancestral origin myth, and the names embodied therein, so that the loss of his own parents is of little consequence in the course of life. Occasionally a child is not adopted by relatives, and then his fate is indeed hard. 736 599

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shelter in the house of my chief, and shared in the food which was being distributed at the almost continuous ceremonial feasts. Now, each family lives alone and we owe Sisk any responsibility for this old man. [178]

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as far as incest rules are concerned. In this particular instance the woman did not show any interest in her new relatives, failed to visit them, or to take part in their ceremonies, so that the adoption, though still legal, has practically lapsed. When this man dies his children will not consider the claims of their father's "sister" to inherit any of his possessions, as they would have done if she had showed herself appreciative of her adoption.

It will thus be seen that the size and composition of the family vary according to the wealth and influence of the father. The duties of the members are difficult to define since they concern almost entirely the routine of life. The father, head of the family, directs the gathering of firewood, repair of the house, obtaining of food supplies, and other matters of the same sort. If he gives a potlatch his children must help him, which they do willingly since they gain from the ceremony. If a father is too autocratic, his older, especially his married children, simply move away. Nor is his power over his younger children unbounded, since their mother's relatives take great interest in their welfare and would resent any ill-treatment.

If a person is killed or wounded, revenge is the affair of his family. Just how many individuals are involved depends on the composition of the family. In the case of the killing of a child, living with his parents alone, none but the father would feel it incumbent to retaliate. If an adult person is murdered, his or her brothers feel and avenge the insult. But should an important member of the community be slain, an old man surrounded by a numerous family, it is the affair of all. Every effort is made to slay the murderer, but if he should escape from the country, the injured group is satisfied by killing one of his family. Here again the same inexact composition is found. A man's son, brother, or father are the only persons strictly liable, and even here the common sense of the Bella Coola outweighs their theoretical laws. A murderer's brother, living in another village, would not be held liable; but more distant relatives living with the offender and considered as his family are liable.

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554 it to the digestive tract. After a man has given four potlatches
556 he feels superior to those who have been unable to do likewise.
622 His name is "bright," "clean," "heavy," "firm," or "upright"
in Bella Coola terms, and so, likewise, his seat. He feels inde-
[578] pendent and proud. Such a chief will fearlessly enter the back-
room where ceremonial rites are taking place, even if not en-
titled to do so.

"He is so strong, he can go where he will," say the Bella Coola.

The advice of such a man is taken because of his ability and prestige, especially by the members of his own family. A few years ago, for example, when a certain Bella Coola died, his brother wished a *kusiut* name-prerogative of the deceased to pass to the dead man's daughter. The girl's mother's father, a *nuuitl* chief, objected, and his desires were followed, although the name in question was not connected in any way with his family. In small matters, too, people gladly carry out the
[592] wishes of a chief. Work around the house is done for him without thought of disobedience. An old man was asked whether, when he was young, chiefs gave many orders and acted as masters in their households.

"You bet," the old man answered emphatically with a dry chuckle.

231 It is difficult now to form an accurate estimate, from obser-
552 vation, of the influence of chiefs solely through virtue of the
622 goods they have expended. But the following is a concrete example. In November, 1923, the writer, while walking through the Bella Coola village, was bitten by a dog. He was told that the animal belonged to a certain old woman. When next he saw the owner he asked her whether she knew that her dog attacked passers-by.

"Yes," she answered, in a matter-of-fact tone, "He is a chief and can do what he likes."

Further questioning elicited the information that the old
[766] woman and her husband, the childless last survivors of an ancestral family, had transmitted some of their ancestral